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By:

26 January 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Secretary of State Proposal re Foreign Observers  
at a U.S. Nuclear Test

1. From the standpoint of CIA intelligence activities, three benefits can be derived from the granting of permission to foreign observers to witness the detonation of a nuclear weapon at the Nevada proving ground this spring. These are:

a. If arrangements could be made to permit such observation by selected intelligence officers employed by foreign services, preferably high officials in such services, more effective cooperation might be brought about.

b. Such observation by liaison officers now stationed in Washington by foreign intelligence services would serve to allay growing fears that intelligence collaboration, particularly in fields having any relationship to atomic energy, is being seriously curtailed by the U.S.

A gesture such as permitting appropriate observation would significantly bolster ebbing relationships.

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2. From broader considerations it is suggested that an invitation to selected foreign observers would be to the benefit of the U.S. in such ways as:

a. It could be used to bolster the military solidarity of the West before the Communist Bloc. It could offset Soviet propaganda designed to prevent Western military alliances. However, consideration should be given to not publicizing invitations in order to prevent Soviet use of the occasion as a springboard for effective propaganda against the atomic pool plan.

b. It would supply a good occasion for releasing to friendly foreign governments declassified information on fall-out from large

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- 2 -

nuclear explosions. Placed in the context of an explosion which has been observed, the proposed release on this subject would be somewhat less frightening. The safety measures taken by the AEC, the low radiation dosages received during close-in observation, etc., would be impressive background. It is suggested that consideration be given to timing the proposed release of information on this subject to coincide with foreign observation of an explosion.

c. It would serve to fill at least one gap in the background of NATO planning officers. It will be recalled that Gen. Gruenther noted the difficulties he faced because of the restricted data classification problem.

3. It should be noted that security reasons should dictate the details of control of observation but that maximum effect could be achieved if the closest possible point of vantage could be chosen in the case of military observers. Stringent radiological safety measures, including changing into field dress (i.e. special clothing), could be used to prevent more than visual observation.



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